

## **“Today’s Teachers Incorporating the Other 3 Rs – Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle – for Earth Day”**

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“Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one.”  
–*Malcolm Forbes*

Teaching used to be about the 3 basic Rs – reading, writing and arithmetic. But today’s teachers are also incorporating the other 3 Rs in their lesson plans – reduce, reuse, and recycle and their relationship to energy. Teachers realize the importance of instilling positive actions in the early years, so children will grow to understand the responsibility they have to take care of the earth and why it is important they do so. This is especially effective in April when Earth Day falls on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of each year. There are many easy steps that can be taken in the classroom that can help our future leaders open their minds to energy and environmental awareness.

An easy way to reinforce energy saving habits while children are in the classroom is to offer a recycling bin for children to throw recyclable materials in. You can also create a lesson plan that educates the kids on benefits of positive energy use and how it will affect their future and their world. Consider the following possibilities to get kids involved with their environment:

- **Field Trips.** Taking children to a hands-on learning experience can make all the difference on their understanding for the way our world works. The Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum offers two exhibits that give children the opportunity to see how alternative energy and energy efficiency works. The “Solar Collector Exhibit” takes students to the top of a firehouse that uses solar panels to collect and store energy. The “Waste to Watts Exhibit” shows students how environmentally friendly technology can turn trash into electricity and how methane gas recovery from landfills can be used as an alternative energy source. In the Lansing area, Michigan Energy Options has a demonstration center open to the public and provides guided tours upon request. At the center, kids can walk through a variety of exhibits that include renewable energy, recycled materials, environmentally friendly products and energy efficiency. Visit [www.michiganenergyoptions.org](http://www.michiganenergyoptions.org); [www.aahom.org](http://www.aahom.org); or a Michigan Energy Demonstration Center in your area ([www.michigan.gov/energyoffice](http://www.michigan.gov/energyoffice)) to schedule your trip.
- **Lesson Plans.** The Department of Energy’s (DOE) site, [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov), offers a wide variety of lesson plans for students in all grades and covers all energy topics. Plans include showing children energy-efficient and energy-wasteful lighting to learn what energy efficiency means and how using less energy will help the environment. Another lesson available on the DOE website serves the

purpose of making children aware that their waste does not just disappear once it is dumped in the garbage. Exposing children to the landfills that take years to decompose will open eyes to the idea that creating less waste decreases pollution. Another opportunity for students is to study the wind speed at various altitudes of the earth. Ask them to recognize the primary areas for wind turbine farms. Discuss how and why wind energy has a promising future.

- **Get Involved.** A simple way to get the class or the entire school involved is to take part in year-round events that promote green living. For example, “National Green Week” encourages students to weigh their trash at the beginning of the week and only bringing reusable containers for their snacks and drinks. At the end of the week the trash is calculated and compared to the first measurement. The amount of trash saved nation-wide is announced on Earth Day. To participate in National Green Week visit: [www.greeneducationfoundation.org](http://www.greeneducationfoundation.org). Earth Hour, a similar concept to National Green Week, is also gaining popularity. By shutting off all power, the State of Michigan has participated in the global event in the past with the purpose of emphasizing the importance we all have on climate change. On Earth Day, State entities join schools, colleges, and universities; businesses; organizations; and citizens to spread knowledge. Inform your students of the difference they and their families can each have on the world and encourage them to participate by choosing an hour to shut off the lights and take small steps towards a big difference.

Generations to come need to see what we take for granted in the present and open their eyes to how it will shape their future. For more tips on how to get your classroom involved, visit [www.michigan.gov/energy](http://www.michigan.gov/energy).